

C L A I M S

1 Sub 1 A method for maintaining software products implemented in a
2 A2 7 plurality of files in client computer systems (12) located
3 decentralized relative to at least one central software
4 maintenance institution (10,24) via a network with which
5 they are connectable with, the method comprising the steps
6 of

7 providing product information in the network system for
8 making it available for said plurality of client systems,

9 the method being characterized by the step of:

10 performing a software maintenance action from the client
11 site by downloading the data required for said maintenance
12 from a sequence of repositories, said sequence of
13 repositories comprising at least one repository more
14 dedicated for at least one particular client system (12)
15 and at least one repository less dedicated for said client
16 system (12).

1 2. The method according to claim 1 in which downloading is
2 decoupled from activating a downloaded program by
3 downloading files in an inactive format which comprises all
4 information required for a later activation of said
5 program.

1 3. The method according to claim 1 in which a fall back to an
2 older program version can be achieved by inactivating the
3 newer version and activating (240) the older version.
4

1 4. The method according to claim 1 in which said step of
2 performing said maintenance action serves for an upgrade of
3 a program on at least one target system and said step
4 comprising the steps of

5
6 generating (130, 150, 170) an input list of files
7 downloadable from said at least two repositories (20, 22,
8 24),

9 generating a list of files present on said target client
10 system (12),

11 comparing (210) said lists, and

12 downloading (220) only files which are not yet present in
13 the target client system.

1 5. The method according to the preceding claim in which a
2 total input list is generated by subsequently accessing the
3 repositories and by merging said input lists with a
4 priority of more local files.

1 6. The method according to the preceding claim further
2 comprising the step of integrating files into the target
3 system which have been identified by a look-aside procedure
4 as residing in a neighbor system easier to be accessed by
5 the target system than one of said repositories (20, 22,
6 24).

1 7. A system in which the method according to any of claims 1
2 to 6 can be performed.

1 8. The system according to the preceding claim in which a file
2 system hierarchy is provided in a plurality of
3 hierarchically arranged repositories (20, 22, 24).

1 9. The system according to the preceding claim in which said
2 at least one repository (20, 22) is an overlay repository
3 in which basically delta information is provided.

1 10. The system according to the preceding claim in which
2 country-level (22) and system-level (20) repositories are
3 provided.

1 11. The system according to the preceding claim in which
2 shadow repositories are provided.

13. Computer program product stored on a computer usable medium comprising computer readable program means for causing a computer to perform the method of any one of the claims 1 to 6.